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AUTHOR Wagner, Betty; Steele, Connie
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ABSTRACT

Information is provided on the following aspects of the Child and Parent Services (CAPS) program for the training of infant caregivers: the modules of study in the caregiver kit, the research basis of the kit, and the use of the kit in teaching field experience courses at the university level. The program was designed for (1) child care aides in group settings, (2) day care providers and Texas Department of Human Resources personnel, and (3) university students majoring in child development. The caregiver kit consists of 10 modules of study which focus on the process of observing, planning, and evaluating environments and planning specific activities for each individual infant. Each module includes slides and coordinated audio cassette tapes; a supplementary picture booklet, an activity booklet, lists of developmental objectives and pre- and posttest questionnaires. The training kit has been field tested in day care centers. (SS)

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A PIAGETIAN-ORIENTED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR INFANT CAREGIVERS

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by

Betty Wagner, M.S.

Connie Steele, Ed.D.

Home and Family Life Department
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	MEDIATED CAREGIVER KIT	1
III.	RESEARCH BASIS OF CAREGIVER KIT	7
IV.	USE OF THE KIT AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL	8

A PIAGETIAN-ORIENTED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR INFANT CAREGIVERS

Betty Wagner and Connie Steele

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1975 two faculty members at Texas Tech University have directed an effort to design an instructional program for the training of infant caregivers. This project, Child And Parent Services (CAPS)[1], attempted to train infant caregivers at three levels: (1) child care aides in group settings, (2) day care providers and Texas Department of Human Resources personnel, and (3) university students majoring in child development.

The focus of each of the models is a study of the behavior of the individual infant. Accurate observation of each child is emphasized as a beginning point in planning an environment for that child. Students and trainees are guided through the process of observing, planning, and evaluating environments and activities for the individual child. This basic curriculum core has been developed into a mediated package, Developmental Programs for Infants and Toddlers: A Caregiver Kit, which will be described.

MEDIATED CAREGIVER KIT

The core curriculum is divided into ten modules of study as follows:

Module A - "A Method of Working"

Module B - "Evaluating the Child and Caregiver:

Module 1 - "The Newcomer--Birth to 4 Months"

Module 2 - "The Socializer--4 to 8 Months"

1 Steele, Connie and Wagner, Betty. 1975-1978. Funded by Texas Department of Human Resources and College of Home Economics, Texas Tech University

Module 3 - "The Space Explorer--8 to 12 Months"

Module 4 - "The Traveler--12 to 18 Months"

Module 5 - "The Thinker--18 to 24 Months"

Module 6 - "The Talker--24 to 30 Months"

Module 7 - "The Questioner--30 to 36 Months"

Module 8 - "The Initiator of Play--36 to 42 Months"

Each module consists of slides and coordinated audio cassette tapes. A picture booklet is also provided for organizations which lack projection equipment or for individual study. A script booklet accompanies the audio cassette tapes. Pads of developmental objectives for the age-level modules, 1 through 8, are coordinated with the mediated curriculum materials. These developmental objectives consist of significant observable behaviors, identified by the authors through a review of developmental studies, including those by Piaget. Examples of behaviors derived from Piagetian literature include the following:

17. Eyes follow path of moving object.
18. Imitates own cooing sounds.
21. Uncovers a partially hidden object or a completely hidden object if he was reaching for object before it was covered.
23. Waits or looks for an expected event.
24. Smiles or vocalizes when adult imitates his sounds.
28. Finds a hidden object <u>if</u> he watched it being hidden.
30. Drops objects into containers.
31. Leans ring against peg.
32. Finds a ball that rolls out-of-sight by following the path of the ball.

35. Tries to continue an activity by touching adult's hand.
36. Turns objects over to look at other side.
37. Expects a slowly moving object to move in its forward path.
40. Imitates pat-a-cake.
41. Finds an object hidden in one of two possible places.
42. Stacks one object on another.
43. Drops and slides objects.
45. Places rings over peg.
52. Tries to continue activity by handing object to adult.
53. Finds object by moving in direction other than object's path.
55. Finds object hidden inside three nested containers.
57. Uses one object to get another.
58. Matches objects that look alike.
59. Turns objects right-side-up.
66. Solves two or three piece puzzles.
72. Finds out the cause of an event.
74. Finds object that moves out-of-sight without following its path to get it.

In Module A of the caregiver kit trainees are directed through a process of planning an optimal environment and program for each child. This procedure is described in a four-step process.

Step 1 emphasizes the importance of "tuning-in" to the behavior of each child through observation of body movements, facial expressions, tone of voice, and, eventually, through expressive language. Trainees are directed

in a system of recording each child's behaviors periodically using the pads of developmental objectives. The age-level modules, 1 through 8, include a verbal and pictorial description of each behavior represented in the developmental objectives.

Step 2 aids the trainee in selecting appropriate developmental objectives for emphasis in each child's environment. Students are instructed to select behaviors which are just emerging or which will soon emerge as the basis for planned activities.

Step 3 delineates ways to plan and present specific activities for each infant which are based upon the observations previously described. The booklet, Developmental Activities for Infants and Toddlers, included in the kit, is utilized for this purpose. Activities in this book are keyed to each of the behaviors in the list of developmental objectives. In addition to a description of the activity, a list of materials needed is included for each activity as shown in the example below:

Developmental Age - 18 to 24 months

Objective Number 55 - Finds object hidden inside three nested containers.

Materials Needed - One sheet of newspaper, match box, cigar box

Description of Activity -
1. While child watches wrap a small toy inside a piece of newspaper.
2. Place the wrapped toy in a large match box.
3. Place the match box inside the cigar box and close the lid.
4. Hand the cigar box to child. Does the child open the two boxes and unwrap the toy? If he hesitates, encourage him to keep trying.

Step 4, evaluating the child's response to the activity, is conducted at the same time the activity is presented. The trainee is instructed in

the importance of modifying the activity to meet the needs of the child. This four-step cycle is repeated frequently with each child in the program.

Special topics which are too detailed or lengthy to discuss thoroughly in the modules are addressed more completely in a reading supplement, Infants and Toddlers in Group Care: A Developmental Program. Examples of topics selected for more complete coverage are

1. Arranging the Room for Infants/Toddlers
2. Self/Control to Aid the Developing Young Child
3. Snacktime
4. Planning an Outdoor Learning Center for Infants/Toddlers
5. Parent and Family Involvement
6. Bibliographies for
   A. General Infant and Toddler Care and Development
   B. Program Development for Infants and Toddlers
   C. Parent Involvement

An evaluation of the caregiver's behavior and knowledge is conducted by each trainee in Module B. Caregivers are instructed to assess their own behaviors with each child periodically. Evaluation sheets are included on pads in the caregiver kit. Examples of items from the sheet titled "Infant Caregiver Behavior" are as follows:

2. I gave the child time to feed him/herself.
4. I touched/held the child during feedings.
5. I talked about the food at the child's level of understanding.
8. I gave the child time to help with his clothing.
9. I touched and handled the child gently during changes of clothing.

13. I talked to the child about how washing materials feel or smell.

15. I showed the child how to wash or dry himself.

17. I watched for signs that the child needed sleep.

21. I put unsafe and unhealthy items out-of-reach.

23. I observed what the child could do and let him/her explore the limits.

27. I talked to parents today about what their child is doing.

32. I responded when the child smiled, talked, or made noises.

For caregivers of children eighteen to forty-two months of age a similar evaluation sheet titled, "Toddler Caregiver Behavior" is provided. Sample items include -

3. I showed the child how to prepare some of his/her own food.

5. I talked to the child about the taste, texture, color of the food.

8. I gave the child time to handle own clothing before and after toileting.

19. I provided a quiet time with singing, reading a story, talking before sleep time.

25. I set up safe but challenging areas for testing child's abilities outside the center.

26. I helped other caregivers when they needed it.

35. I gave the child choices of at least two things to do--both of which were acceptable to me.

42. I sang to or played music for the child, encouraging him to select it.

49. I placed the child in situations for his/her problem solving.

In addition to this self-assessment of behavior a caregiver questionnaire titled, TADPOLE "Q" (Tech Assessment Device for Promoting Optimal Learning Environments), may be used to test knowledge of child growth and development. TADPOLE "Q" presents short descriptions of a child during each stage from birth to forty-two months of age. In the questions that follow each description the respondent checks all acceptable answers. A sample case study follows:

DON

> When Don was taken to his mother for the first time as a newborn, he had his thumb in his mouth. Now that he is a few weeks old he still sucks his thumb frequently.
>
> Why does Don suck his thumb at this early age?
> ____1. He is insecure.
> ____2. He doesn't think about what he is doing--it is just natural for young infants.
> ____3. His parents have been too easy going allowing this bad habit.
> ____4. He is trying to annoy his parents.

Copies of TADPOLE "Q" are provided in the kit in both English and Spanish. It is suggested that this questionnaire be used as a pretest to be taken before beginning sutdy of the curriculum materials. The authors are interested in the evaluation of the kit by use of the TADPOLE "Q". If the caregiver will return the pretest and later posttest the authors will replace the questionnaire at no charge. TADPOLE "Q" is also available on videotape in either English or Spanish for users of the kit.

RESEARCH BASIS OF CAREGIVER KIT

A major source of information and materials for the caregiver kit was a study of thirty families in Lubbock, Texas, begun in 1974.[2] This tri-ethnic

2 Wagner, Betty, Steele, Connie, and Kiniry, Sue. "Assessment and Development of Parental Competence in Promoting Cognitive Growth of Infants and Young Children". Funded by College of Home Economics and College of Education, Texas Tech University.

study, from which data are still being analyzed, provides the parent-involvement orientation for the curriculum. Each module in the caregiver kit contains one or more suggestions for relating to parents.

Other studies have focussed on testing the constructs and establishing the average ages for the behaviors represented on the pads of developmental objectives.[3] In these studies graduate students have utilized the community day nurseries, and more recently, our Texas Tech University Child Development Center, to verify or modify the list of developmental objectives.

The use of the curriculum materials with child care aides and providers was studied in the summer, 1978, using Austin, Texas infant/toddler centers.[4] Currently, an intensive study of the effects of the program on child functioning is being conducted in Texas Tech University Child Development Center using Bayley test scores as the dependent variable.[5]

USE OF THE KIT AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

The ideas, organization, and many of the materials grew out of two child development courses taught by the authors at Texas Tech University. In these two courses, Infant Development and Development of the Young Child, the methodology was developed and refined. In the initiation of these courses the field experience was located in community child care

3 Steele, Connie; Wagner, B.; Hrncir, Elizabeth; Masten, Yondell; and Blake, Donna. "Testing the Validity of the Constructs of the CAPS Developmental Objectives". 1977-78. Funded by Texas Department of Human Resources and College of Home Economics, Texas Tech University.

4 Wagner, Betty and Steele, Connie. "Child and Parent Services (CAPS) Field Testing of Caregiver Kit". 1978. Funded by Texas Department of Human Resources and College of Home Economics, Texas Tech University.

5 Wagner, Betty and Law, Cylian. "Program Effectiveness in the Texas Tech University Child Development Center". 1979. Funded by Home and Family Life Research, College of Home Economics, Texas Tech University and Texas Department of Human Resources.

centers. With the establishment of the infant unit of the Child Development Center in the fall semester, 1977, studentsmay receive most of their two hours per week field experience in the campus facility. The community tie with the university program is maintained, however, by offering scholarships to families of infants and young children in order to maintain an economic and ethnic balace representative of the larger community. To further facilitate this goal additional services are sought through school and city agencies to provide transportation for those children whose parents cannot afford the time and money involved.

Cooperation of the United Way Day Nurseries (Title XX) in Lubbock, Texas, made the development of the CAPS caregiver kit possible. Many of the approximately 600 photographs were made in these community centers, in addition to the campus Child Development Center. Continued evaluation and feedback is sought by the authors from users of the kits in the twelve Department of Human Resources regions in the state of Texas.[6]

6 For information regarding availability of caregiver kit for non-contract purposes write Ms. Betty Wagner or Dr. Connie Steele, Department of Home and Family Life, Box 4170, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 79409.